

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 QUITO 09450 301453Z

43

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-07 AID-05 AGR-05 COME-00 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /074 W

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R 301305Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8454

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 9450

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ELAB, EAGR

SUBJECT: AGRARIAN REFORM

REF: A) QUITO 9191 B) WILSON/VERA MEMCON OF DEC. 18, 1975

C) GUAYAQUIL 1925

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: AS THE JAN. 1 DEADLINE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW APPROACHES PRESSURES FROM GROUPS OPPOSING AND SUPPORTING THE LEGISLATION ARE INCREASING. NEWSPAPERS ARE EDITORIALIZING MORE ABOUT AGRARIAN REFORM, UNCERTAINTY INHERENT IN IT, AND THE POOR CONDITIONS OF LIFE IN THE RURAL AREAS. SEVERAL CASES OF VIOLENCE STEMMING FROM DISAGREEMENTS OVER LAND TENURE HAVE BEEN REPORTED AND THE GOE, ALLEGING THREATS OF VIOLENCE, CANCELLED THE CAMPESINO DEMONSTRATION SCHEDULED FOR DEC. 28 IN GUAYAQUIL. THE DEMONSTRATION'S SPONSORS HOPE TO RESCHEDULE THE EVENT FOR JAN. 11. THE GOE IS STILL APPARENTLY COMMITTED TO A MEASURED AND GRADUAL AGRARIAN REFORM TO BEGIN JAN. 1. OPPOSITION TO IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LAW IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO INCREASE AND BECOME MORE VOCAL IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS AS THE GOVERNMENT TAKES ITS FIRST STEPS TO REDISTRIBUTE LAND. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 QUITO 09450 301453Z

2. AS THE JAN. 1 IMPLEMENTATION DATE OF THE GOE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW DRAWS NEAR GROUPS BOTH SUPPORTING AND OPPOSING THE LAW ARE INCREASING THEIR PUBLIC PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT. OPPOSITION GROUPS, INCLUDING ASSOCIATIONS OF LAND OWNERS, CONTINUE TO REPEAT EARLIER ARGUMENTS THAT THE LAW IS UNFAIR AND VAGUE AND THAT IT CAN ONLY BE ENFORCED IN AN ARBITRARY AND SUBJECTIVE MANNER. THE LATEST VOICE TO JOIN THE OPPOSITION CHORUS IS THAT OF THE QUITO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE LAW AS ANTI-JURIDICAL, ABSURED, IMPRACTICAL AND CONTRADICTORY.

3. ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY LACKING THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR PUBLICITY THAT ARE ENJOYED BY THE OPPOSITION, THE PRO-REFORM GROUPS ARE ALSO TAKING THEIR CASE TO THE PUBLIC AND THE GOE THROUGH PAID ADVERTISEMENTS. THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GUAYAQUIL PUBLISHED A PRO-REFORM AD, AND THE ORGANIZATIONS SPONSORING THE DEMONSTRATION IN SUPPORT OF AGRARIAN REFORM THAT WAS SCHEDULED FOR GUAYAQUIL DEC. 28 ALSO HAVE PUBLISHED ANNOUNCEMENTS.

4. NEWSPAPERS (PARTICULARLY GUAYAQUIL'S EL TELEGRAFO) HAVE BEEN DEVOTING INCREASING EDITORIAL COVERAGE TO AGRARIAN QUESTIONS. EL TELEGRAFO DIRECTED ITS LEAD EDITORIALS ON THREE CONSECUTIVE DAYS (DEC. 26-28) TO THE CONDITIONS OF RURAL LIFE AND THE NEED FOR REFORM. THE PAPER, HOWEVER, VIEWS THE CURRENT LAW AS INADEQUATE AND LAMENTS THAT THE GOE HAS CREATED SUCH UNCERTAINTY AMONG THE LAND OWNERS BY TRYING TO IMPOSE REFORM WHILE UNDER POLITICAL PRESSURE AND THROUGH A LAND REFORM AGENCY (IERAC) INFILTRATED BY EXTREMISTS. TELEGRAFO APPLAUDED THE GOVERNMENT'S SUSPENSION OF THE DEC. 28 CONCENTRATION OF FARMERS AND AGRARIAN REFORM SUPPORTERS.

5. SEVERAL CASES OF VIOLENCE IN CONNECTION WITH LAND TENURE DISPUTES WITH BOTH DEAD AND WOUNDED, HAVE BEEN RECENTLY REPORTED. AT LEAST ONE CASE, ON CHRISTMAS DAY IN YAGUACHI, INVOLVED CAMPESINOS ATTEMPTING TO SETTLE LANDS ALREADY HELD BY A LAND OWNER. ONE CAMPESINO WAS REPORTED KILLED AND SEVEN WOUNDED. OTHER REPORTED DEATHS RESULTED FROM ONE GROUP OF CAMPESINOS FIGHTING ANOTHER

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 QUITO 09450 301453Z

OVER DISPUTED LANDS.

6. THE GOE, CITING PLANNED PROVOCATIONS AND VIOLENCE, DENIED PERMISSION FOR THE CAMPESINO DEMONSTRATION IN FAVOR OF AGRARIAN REFORM SCHEDULED FOR GUAYAQUIL ON DEC. 28 (SEE REF C). REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SPONSORING ORGANIZATION, THE FRENTE UNITARIO DE LUCHA POR LA REFORMA AGRARIA, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS, ARE IN QUITO DEC.

29 IN AN ATTEMPT TO SEE PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ. THEY  
WILL APPARENTLY SEEK GOE PERMISSION TO RESCHEDULE THE  
DEMONSTRATION FOR JAN. 11 AND WILL ASK RODRIGUEZ TO  
ATTEND.

7. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE UNMBER OF STATEMENTS ABOUT  
AGRARIAN REFORM MADE BY GOE OFFICIALS HAS DECREASED MARK-  
EDLY IN THE PAST WEEK, THE GOVERNMENT IS APPARENTLY FIRM  
IN ITS INTENTION TO CARRY OUT A GRADUAL AND MEANINGFUL  
AGRARIAN REFORM BEGINNING JAN. 1. SINCE THE SCHEDULED  
DEC. 28 DEMONSTRATION WAS ACTUALLY IN SUPPORT OF THE  
GOE AGRARIAN REFORM LAW, AND WE HAVE HEARD FROM SEVERAL  
SOURCES THAT THE GOE MADE A SIZEABLE FINANCIAL CONTRIBU-  
TION TO SUPPORT THE DEMONSTRATION, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT  
THE GOVERNMENT MUST HAVE BEEN CONVINCED OF THE LIKELI-  
HOOD OF VIOLENCE TO HAVE CANCELLED THE DEMONSTRATION.  
OPPOSITION TO AGRARIAN REFORM IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN TO  
INCREASE AND BECOME MORE VOCAL AS THE GOE MOVES TO IMPLE-  
MENT THE LAW AFTER JAN. 1.  
BREWSTER

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## Message Attributes

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